

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG FROM AMBASSADOR BOWDLER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SF
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY BENJAMIN POGRUND, RAND DAILY MAIL

REF: USUN 0149,

1. YOUR RESPONSES TO POGRUND'S QUESTIONS WILL BE USEFUL
AND IN THE CASE OF NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA ESPECIALLY TIMELY.
I BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE RESPONSE TO THE FIRST
QUESTION ON THE S.A. GENERAL ELECTION COULD BECOME THE
FOCUS OF OFFICIAL AND SEMI-OFFICIAL REACTION AND DISTRACT
ATTENTION FROM THE MORE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE PACKAGE.
FURTHERMORE, COMING ON THE EVE OF THE NEW YORK PROXIMITY
TALKS, THE SAG PROGAPANDA MACHINE CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE ANY
OPPORTUNITY TO CONFUSE THINKING HERE AT A TIME WHEN WE WANT TO
DRAW THE ISSUES ON NAMIBIA STARKLY AND CONVINCINGLY.

2. THE PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS IS CERTAIN TO JUMP ON THE
THESIS THAT BECAUSE THE NATIONALIST PARTY RECEIVED A
VOTE LESS THAN HALF OF THE TOTAL OF REGISTERED VOTERS,
THE PARTY DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE MAJORITY OF
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THE WHITES. I EXPECT THEY WILL POINT OUT THE PARALLEL
WITH PERCENTAGE PARTICIPATION IN OUR OWN ELECTIONS AND
WILL CHARGE THAT WE ARE TRYING TO DENY THE REALITY OF
THE NATIONALIST PARTY'S STRONG POLITICAL SUPPORT AMONG
THE WHITE POPULATION. I MYSELF DO NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD
BE ACCURATE TO CONCLUDE THAT THE MAJORITY OF THOSE
ELIGIBLE VOTERS WHO DID NOT GO TO THE POLLS WERE

ESSENTIALLY CASTING A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. AS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD, A GOOD MANY OF THE VOTERS WHO STAYED HOME WERE PROBABLY SUFFERING FROM HABITUAL APATHY. THE DECREASE IN THE VOTER TURN-OUT WAS, HOWEVER, NOTEWORTHY. THIS PHENOMENON WAS DUE TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS INCLUDING THE RELUCTANCE OF SOME FORMER UP MEMBERS TO VOTE FOR ANY OF THE PARTIES AND THE USE OF THE OUTDATED 1974 VOTER ROLLS. MOREOVER, WITH THE OUTCOME IN ALL BUT A FEW CONSTITUENCIES A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, THE INCENTIVE FOR SOME NAT SUPPORTERS TO GO TO THE POLLS MAY HAVE BEEN LESS THAN IT OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN. NEVERTHELESS, THERE SEEMS TO BE, AS YOU SUGGEST, A DECLINING INTEREST IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS ON THE PART OF SOME WHITE VOTERS IN S.A. I DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT WE CAN DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT THE NATS DO NOT ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF A SIZEABLE MAJORITY OF THE WHITE POPULATION.

3. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT PUBLICLY CRITICISING THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AS PARLIAMENT OPENS WOULD BE USED BY VORSTER TO RIDICULE THE PFP WHICH, WITH ALL OF ITS FAULTS, REMAINS THE ONLY GROUP CAPABLE OF CHALLENGING THE GOVERNMENT AND CURBING ITS EXCESSES. THE PFP, WHILE IT REJECTED ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE AND ECHOED NP CRITICISM OF "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE" DID CAMPAIGN ON THE POLICY OF SEEKING A SHARED SOCIETY. WE CAN ALSO HOPE THAT THEY WILL

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SUPPORT OUR REASONABLE PROPOSALS ON NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA. WE NEED TO KEEP THIS VOICE ON OUR SIDE.

4. I WOULD LIKE TO RECOMMEND REPLACING THE RESPONSE TO QUESTION NUMBER ONE AS PROVIDED IN REFTEL WITH A BRIEFER REPLY, WHICH WOULD STILL RAISE THE POINT ABOUT NOT LEAPING TO CONCLUSIONS ON THE STRENGTH OF WHITE SUPPORT FOR THE POLICY OF APARTHEID. FOLLOWING IS SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE:

BEGIN QUOTE:
MY REACTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE DIFFERENT FROM MOST. I DON'T VIEW THE ELECTIONS AS SUCH A GREAT VICTORY. ONE SHOULD NOTE AT THE OUTSET THAT THE NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION INVOLVED ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA: SLIGHTLY MORE THAN A MILLION OUT OF A TOTAL VOTING AGE POPULATION OF OVER 12 MILLION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE RESULTS DO NOT NECESSARILY LEAD TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE WHITE POPULATION SUPPORT APARTHEID POLICIES. FIRST OF ALL, THERE WAS A NOTABLE DROP IN THE PERCENTAGE OF VOTER TURNOUT AS COMPARED WITH PREVIOUS ELECTIONS SINCE SOUTH AFRICA BECAME A REPUBLIC. SECONDLY, MANY WHITE VOTERS APPARENTLY SUPPORTED THE NATIONAL PARTY NOT OUT OF STRONG IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT,

BUT AS A RESULT OF THE SIEGE PSYCHOLOGY THAT HAD BEEN GENERATED IN THE COUNTRY. THE ELECTIONS DO NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT THERE IS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF ROOM FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP EMERGING IN SOUTH AFRICA. A LARGE NUMBER OF WHITE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY, I BELIEVE, ARE LOOKING FOR A RELEVANT AND REALISTIC APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF HOW BLACKS, WHITES, COLOREDS AND ASIANS MIGHT LIVE TOGETHER. AND SO, IN A STRANGE WAY, I LOOK WITH A SENSE OF HOPE ON THIS ELECTION. MY HOPE IS THAT SOMEWHERE OUT OF THIS CONFUSION, A GENUINE LEADERSHIP WILL EMERGE TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF SOUTH AFRICA. END QUOTE.

5. IF YOU CONCUR, I WILL PASS THE RESPONSE AMENDED AS ABOVE TO POGRUND.

BOWDLER

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